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Kilroy Was Here

Kilroy was here. But who was Kilroy? And where was he? Well, if you were in the military during World War II, you knew who he was and where he was because he always seemed to get there before you did.

This strange sketch of a man peering over a fence started showing up in various forms everywhere the American military went. No one would ever admit to making the drawing; they would always say it was there when they arrived. One version of the graffiti is shown here:

Soon it became a challenge to put Kilroy in as many places as possible (and some that were not possible). Kilroy was on ships as they invaded islands, on block walls of cities that were attacked, everywhere there was any spare space (especially inside rest rooms and outhouses). He was said to be on top of Mt. Everest, on the Statute of Liberty in New York, on the Arc De Triomphe in Paris, on Big Ben in London. Supposedly, his sketch could even be seen in the dust on the moon! (This was the '40s; not 1969!)

Some people reported "reliably" that Hitler was looking for an American spy named Kilroy who seemed to be everywhere.

When Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at Potsdam, Stalin was heard to ask his aide as he

emerged from the specially built outhouse, "Who is Kilroy?"

Well, who was Kilroy? We may never know. Many have claimed the distinction. The most plausible identity is attributed to a man named James Kilroy who worked in the shipyard in Quincy, Massachusetts, near Boston. The workers were paid by the number of rivets they installed. Kilroy would put a chalk mark beside the rivets that had been counted but the workers would erase the mark so the rivets would be

counted again and they would receive more pay. This exasperated Kilroy so he began writing in big dark letters, "KILROY WAS HERE". In the rush to get the ships into service, they were not being painted and the words remained. When the millions of sailors and soldiers saw this catchphrase, someone added the sketch and the legend was initiated and perpetuated.

Kilroy provided a lighter moment during the horror that was World War II. He was around during later military campaigns but never to the same extent as during that time.

Do you remember Kilroy? Where did you see him? Please send us your sketch and we will publish as many as possible. Maybe we need Kilroy again.

